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THREE TRACTS

RESPECTING THE

CONVERSION and INSTRUCTION

OF THE

FREE INDIANS

AND

NEGROE SLAVES

IN THE

COLONIES.

ADDRESSED TO THE

VENERABLE SOCIETY

FOR

PROPAGATION OF THE GOSPEL

IN

FOREIGN PARTS,

IN THE YEAR 1768.

By WILLIAM KNOX, Esq.

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M.DCC.LXXXIX.

TRACT THE FIRST.

OF THE

INDIANS IN THE COLONIES.

THE variety of ſects to be found amongſt the European inhabitants of the colonies, though a thing to be lamented by a lover of unity among Chriſtians, and frequently urged as a proof of the little ſucceſs attending the ſociety's miſſions, is in truth the cleareſt evidence of the great ſervice done to religion by the venerable Society for propagating the goſpel, and the great benefits the people of America have derived from its eſtabliſhment. In almoſt every new ſettled colony the inhabitants were too poor and too much diſperſed to agree upon a common place for public worſhip, or to maintain a clergyman to officiate at it, and their deſcendants, though more numerous and drawn nearer together, would hardly have deſired to know more of religion than they had learned from their fathers. But, when through means of

the Society, a regular mode of worſhip had been ſettled, and the duties of religion were inculcated at ſtated times, the people who would have ſatisfied their own minds with never attending any church, had there been none to go to, found themſelves ſtimulated by their own conſcience, or reproached by their neighbours, and ſo compelled either to attend the ſubſiſting form of worſhip, or procure one they liked better; and thus has religion been propagated throughout the whole country.

But although one great purpoſe of the Society has been anſwered, and the deſcendants of the European ſettlers have been kept back from degenerating into the barbariſm and ignorance of the natives, it is much to be lamented that ſo little has been done towards inſtructing the free Indians or Negroe ſlaves in the colonies. The obſtacles to the converſion of the Indians are indeed many and formidable. Were they only ignorant of our religion, their natural good ſenſe would give hopes of their imbibing its doctrines, ſo ſoon as they were properly explained and ſet before them; but the misfortune is, that they are not only ignorant of it, but what they do know, and are taught, is diametrically oppoſite to the doctrines of Chriſtianity. While theyare infants they are taught to repeat the warlike atchievements of their anceſtors, and the tortures they ſuffered or inflicted upon their enemies; and they are required to prove the ſincerity of their

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profeſſions to imitate ſuch examples, by patiently bearing hunger for ſeveral days, ſuffering their limbs to be lacerated by fiſhes teeth, or ſtanding reſolutely under a plate of iron with burning coals upon their heads until the ſcalp is parched to a cinder. No wonder then that their wars are hereditary, and that Indian reſentments are ſo implacable. As the object of their wars is always the utter extirpation of their enemies, they are inſtructed to deſtroy an enemy in the manner the moſt ſafe for themſelves; and for the ſame reaſon, killing a woman or a child is more highly honoured than ſlaying a man. Hence their ſubtlety and their cruelty to the innocent and helpleſs inhabitants. No Indian can be conſiderable in his nation until he is dubbed a warrior, and that he can never be without producing a ſcalp, and hence the frequency of wars with each other. Of all our methods of making war, none appeared to them ſo ridiculous and abſurd as our ſparing priſoners, and many of their parties withdrew from us on that account. What, ſay they, after you have got your enemy in your power, will you let him go, that he may kill you or your friends again? Vagrant in their manner of life, without ſocial intercourſe even among each other, jealous in the higheſt degree of their liberty and independency, and attached to their cuſtoms and nation, with more than Spartan pride and tenacity. Such we found them. They had, however, ſome

notions

notions of honeſty in their little dealings, but thoſe we have eradicated. Our traders and they now mutually deceive each other. Our traders cut ſhort their meaſure, and they ſow lead bullets in the ears and tails of their ſkins. Both expect to be cheated, and under that expectation each makes his bargain, and fraud is become ſo cuſtomary, that it would be very difficult, if not impracticable, to eſtabliſh an honeſt tariff between them. The Indians never complain of a trader cheating them unleſs he is remarkably dextrous and exorbitant, and then they only charge them with cheating them *too much.*

Very unpromiſing principles, and diſpoſitions theſe, on which to graft the meek, forbearing, equitable, and benevolent tenets of Chriſtianity!

The cauſe is not, however, to be forſaken as altogether hopeleſs. Their converſion may, through God's bleſſing, ſtill be effected, though a much greater compaſs muſt be taken than has hitherto been thought neceſſary, to attain it.

The proteſtant miſſionaries, in order to do themſelves credit, make it their firſt object to get the Indians to ſubmit to be baptized, and preparatory thereto they opened to them the moſt myſterious doctrines of Chriſtianity, ſhocking their pride by diſplaying their original corruptions and blindneſs, and exciting their jealouſy, by the change they are told is to be wrought in them. They inform them of the

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ſpiritual worſhip, which is to be paid to the Deity, ridicule their taliſmans, and at once exhort them to ceaſe to be Indians, lay aſide all their own cuſtoms, quit their country and independency, and become a poor contemptible people among us. The Roman catholic miſſionaries take a different method, and have therefore been more ſucceſsful. They firſt conciliate the good will of the Indians by following their cuſtoms, and learning their language. Being provided with medicines, and ſkilled in the uſe of them, they ſoon get the Indians to truſt more in their taliſmans for their cure, than in their own. And the miſſionary becomes the Indian conjurer, before he diſcloſes his purpoſe. Their inquiry whence he had his taliſman and its virtues, naturally opens to him an occaſion of diſcourſing to them of the ſupreme Being, whom they all have ſome notion of the *maſter of breath*, and of Chriſt Jeſus the great Conjurer, who cured all the world on the other ſide the great water, and would have come to the Indians if he had not been killed by bad people. He ſhews them a relick, which he pretends cures all diſeaſes, and which his love for the Indians made him bring to them. So far from ſhocking their prejudices by preaching forgiveneſs of injuries or peace with their enemies, he points their enmity againſt his nation's enemies as thoſe who had prevented the great Conjurer from coming to them. If by following his inſtructions they gain an advantage over their enemies or eſcape unhurt,

unhurt, they readily impute their good fortune to the virtues of his taliſman, and in their future expeditions ſubmit to ſuch diſcipline, by way of preparation for a ſucceſsful enterpriſe, as he ſhall enjoin them. Thus are they baptized, and made to believe in Chriſt, without perceiving that they are become Chriſtians; and their attachment to the miſſionary is ſuch, as to lead them to adopt implicitly any mode or cuſtom he may think proper to inſtitute. *Such Chriſtians* do not indeed deſerve to be called proſelytes; for although they looked upon our Saviour to have been a great benefactor to mankind, they neither know him for their redeemer, nor conform to his doctrine or example. Theſe inſtructions were however ſufficient for political purpoſes, and made them good allies to the French, though but indifferent members of the catholic church, and perhaps the continual contentions between the European ſettlers in America might be the reaſon why the French miſſionaries gave them no better notions. But all enmity having now ceaſed in thoſe parts, and the whole dominion being in Great Britain; our *State* and *Church* are both called upon to co-operate in forming and ſupporting a probable ſyſtem for converting theſe ſavage people. To contribute what in me lies to ſo good a work, is the intention of this paper, and I ſhall therefore go on to ſuggeſt ſuch a plan as my acquaintance with the Indians gives me hopes would

ſucceed,

ſucceed, ſubmitting it to the conſideration of the venerable Society.

In this great undertaking government muſt lead the way. Inſtructions ſhould be ſent to the agents and governors, to exhort the Indians to live in peace with each other. And to take away the motive of the young men to make war, the king's officers ſhould be directed to diſtinguiſh thoſe who were expert in hunting or cultivating the ground, by preſents above the warriors. This would preſently beget a civil means of becoming conſiderable. To induce them to leave their women and children always in their towns, which is the firſt ſtep towards their civilization, they ſhould be furniſhed with a variety of garden ſeeds, and tools to plant them with. Neat cattle would be acceptable preſents, and a great means of civilizing them, and poultry would oblige them to fence and incloſe their habitations. Locks and hinges ſhould be furniſhed them as a means of teaching them property; and no regard ſhould ever be ſhown to thoſe who made depredations upon others. Government having done ſo much, the Society might then begin. The miſſionary ſhould be inſtructed in phyſic, and be ſupplied with medicines. To give him conſequence it would be proper that the ſuperintendant gave him a deputation for the town or nation he reſided in. He ſhould be enabled to pay the Indians for building him a neat houſe, and cultivating ſome ground as a garden. He ſhould be furniſhed

niſhed with cows, and every means of ſubſiſtence, which was intended to be introduced among the Indians. He might introduce the ſilk culture among them, in the warm and temperate climates, by planting the mulberry trees, and paying the women and children for gathering the leaves. By ſuch kindneſſes they would be led to conſider him as their beſt friend, and would not oppoſe their children learning any ſong or rhyme he might pay them for getting by heart. The great Indian nations would never ſuffer their children to be taught our language; their policy is to keep as much from us as they can; ſo that whatever inſtruction is given them muſt be ſtolen upon them in their own language. As no real proſelytes were ever made, but thoſe who ſought to be converted; an illiterate people muſt firſt have a deſire of knowledge excited in them before they can be taught. Curioſity muſt therefore firſt be excited in the Indians before their attention to any doctrine can be engaged, and when their attention is fixed, ſuch things ſhould only be propoſed to them as their preſent ſtate will admit of their receiving. It ought to be remembered, that man was intended for poliſhed ſociety, and that the Chriſtian diſpenſation is adapted to him in his beſt ſtate. It was not till after the Greek and Roman civility had been ſpread over the world, that Chriſtianity was promulgated. While the Jews were an erratic people, had

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ſettlements to purchaſe by the ſword, hereditary antipathies againſt other nations to maintain, and were to pride themſelves in cuſtoms which diſtinguiſhed them from the reſt of mankind, a leſs perfect ſyſtem was thought better ſuited to their circumſtances. The Indians have no ſacrifices nor days of expiation, nor do they pay any ſort of religious worſhip to any thing in heaven or earth. It would therefore be impracticable in the beginning, to make them comprehend the neceſſity for Chriſt's ſuffering, or to convince them of the benefits derived to them through his blood. They could not poſſibly underſtand the prohibitions in either the ſecond or third commandment, and as all that they do is work of neceſſity, they would not be much edified by lectures upon the fourth. Baptiſm ſhould not be adminiſtered to children whoſe parents had not received it themſelves, or deſired it for them. I have ſaid, that the Indians are jealous of their independency, and if their children ſhould be flattered to receive that ſacrament, they would think ſomething very different from its purpoſe was intended by it.

When the Engliſh traders come into the Indian nation, the miſſionary ſhould then exerciſe his function. Their aſſembling on a Sunday would lead the Indians to inquire what was doing, and the miſſionary to oblige them, might preach in the Indian language. His diſcourſe ſhould notwithſtanding be directed entirely to the traders, but ſo framed,

as to make favourable impreſſions on the Indians, and induce them to come again. On ſuch occaſions he ſhould exhort the traders to look upon the Indians as brothers, all created by one common father the *great Spirit*, and to deal juſtly, and not to uſe their knowledge of trade to over-reach the unſuſpecting Indian. He ſhould enlarge upon the great advantages they derived from having received their birth and education in a country where the will of Almighty God had been clearly revealed, and thence urge them to be more particularly careful in their conduct towards the Indians, who had no ſuch advantages, but were brought up in the wild foreſts without other inſtruction than their own natural ſagacity furniſhed them with. He ſhould repreſent it to be in an eſpecial manner their duty to inform the Indians of any thing which the *great Spirit* had revealed, if they deſired to know it; and that as in another life they ſhould be all one people, ſo they ſhould now live together in the ſame manner. That they were to remember, that in the other world, when they came to live again, they ſhould be rewarded or puniſhed according to what they had done here, for that the *great Spirit* knew every thing they did, and ſaw them wherever they went. Theſe are things the Indians could underſtand, and would probably deſire to hear again; and ſome would perhaps be led to wiſh for farther inſtruction. The public exhortations ſhould nevertheleſs

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be continued upon the firſt ſimple plan, becauſe as new comers would every day be dropping in, it would be much better to give higher inſtruction in private to ſuch whoſe early attention or quicker parts might require it, than to overpower the underſtandings of weaker or duller hearers. No point of controverſy among Chriſtians ſhould ever be mentioned, not only to ſave the Indians the perplexity of diſcuſſing things with which they can have nothing to do, but to engage the aſſiſtance of all denominations of Chriſtians in the colonies, who, if they were acquainted with the plan of our miſſionaries, would readily give their own the like catholic inſtructions. Whatever be the method taken up, if any ſucceſs be expected from it among the Indians, it muſt be founded on this principle, *that nothing is to be preſſed upon them*; their own deſires muſt move foremoſt, and thoſe will always carry them to aſk as much as they can receive.

TRACT

TRACT THE SECOND.

OF THE NEGROE SLAVES IN THE COLONIES.

THE difficulties attending a plan for the inſtruction of the negroe ſlaves in our colonies are very different from the obſtacles which preſent themſelves to the converſion of the North American Indians. The quick ſagacity of the Indian keeps him aloof from every attempt to convert him. The dull ſtupidity of the Negroe leaves him without any deſire for inſtruction. Whether the Creator originally formed theſe black people a little lower than other men, or that they have loſt their intellectual powers through diſuſe, I will not aſſume the province of determining; but certain it is, that a *new Negroe*, (as thoſe lately imported from Africa are called,) is a complete definition of indolent ſtupidity, nor could a more forcible means be employed for the converſion of a deiſt, than ſetting one of theſe creatures before him, as an example of man in a ſtate of nature, *unbi-*

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aſſed by revelation or education. Their ſtupidity does not however authorize us to conſider them as beaſts for our uſe, much leſs to deny them all knowledge of the common ſalvation. The Negroes born in our colonies are undoubtedly capable of receiving inſtruction, and thoſe who are born among the French are inſtructed in the Roman Catholic religion; but our planters are generally averſe to their Negroes being taught any thing but labour, and yet the generality of our North American planters have a regard for religion, and are punctual in the diſcharge of its duties, as far as they think themſelves obliged by them. How this comes to paſs muſt be our firſt inquiry; for unleſs the planter can be prevailed on to give his aſſiſtance, it will be in vain to propoſe any method for inſtructing his ſlaves.

Our planters objections to their Negroes being inſtructed is ſimply this, that inſtruction renders them leſs fit or leſs willing to labour. Experience juſtifies their opinion, and a little reflection will convince us that ſuch muſt be the conſequence.

The Britiſh laws diſown perpetual ſervitude, and the people of theſe iſlands have a general antipathy to ſlavery. The right of the planter to his Negroe is only founded on the acts of his provincial aſſembly, and beyond their juriſdiction he has no power over him. If he teaches his Negroe to read one book, he will of himſelf read another, and ſuch has been the imprudence of ſome ill-

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informed writers, that books are not wanting to exhort the Negroes to rebel againſt their maſters. Were the Negroes univerſally taught to read, and *a late publication*,* which out of reſpect I forbear to name, put into their hands and circulated among them, there would be little doubt that the next ſhips informed us of a general inſurrection of the Negroes, and the maſſacre of their owners; and yet the writer's intention was certainly to engage the planter to have his Negroes inſtructed.

The caſe is very different with the French planter and his Negroes. The perpetual ſervitude of the Negroes is not only conſented to by that nation, but is expreſſly authorized by the king's edict: "Declarons les eſclaves "eſtre meubles & comme tels entrent en la "communaute, les enfans qui naiſtront de "marriage entre eſclaves ſeront eſclaves, & "appartiendront aux maiſtres des femmes eſ-"claves," are the terms of the perpetual edict of March, 1687. The French planter can therefore have no apprehenſion of loſing his ſlave by giving him inſtruction, nor will the ſlave's being inſtructed make him leſs willing to obey his maſter. There are no books to be given them to read which charge their maſters with *infringing both divine and human laws*† by retaining them in ſlavery; nor are ſuch doctrines tranſmitted to them under the

* Biſhop Warburton's Sermon before the Society for Propagation of the Goſpel.

† Vide Ibid.

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ſanction of a religious ſociety compoſed of the governors of the national church. Here then is the true ſource of the evil, and the remedy is obvious. If the purchaſing a Negroe for a ſlave be an *infringement of divine and human laws*,* in God's name, why is ſuch a trade permitted? A few words in an act of parliament prohibiting the importation or ſale of Negroes in our colonies will deſtroy the practice in future.——And a few words more, declaring the offspring of Negroes already imported to be free, will prevent ſlavery extending to the next generation. This method is certainly the moſt proper, and the only one which can have efficacy; nor does it ſeem very conſiſtent in any member of either houſe of parliament to declaim without doors againſt the integrity of this tranſaction, and bear no teſtimony againſt its encouragement within. Even the laſt ſeſſion of parliament, 1766, furniſhed an occaſion for aſſerting the rights of the Negroes, and diſplaying the infamy of trading in them. The act for opening free ports in the Weſt-Indies declares Negroes a *lawful commodity* and to be imported and ſold there upon paying a certain duty; but neither upon the paſſing that act, nor upon the paſſing any former one for the encouragement of the African trade, does there appear a ſingle proteſt in abhorrence of that trade, or *of treating rational creatures as property*.† But, beſides, the

* Warburton's Sermon.
† Ibid.

perpetual ſervitude of the Negroes in our colonies is not the act of their maſters, nor is it the mere effect of their power over thoſe wretches. In every colony the right of the owner is fixed by the law of the colony framed under the king's inſtructions, and afterwards tranſmitted for his approbation in his privy council; it was therefore in the diſcretion of the privy council to repeal all theſe acts of the colonies, when they were tranſmitted, and ſuch of them as have not received the royal confirmation may ſtill be repealed; and if that were done, every Negroe born in the colonies would become entitled to all the privileges and franchiſes of the natural born ſubjects of this realm. How then does it happen, that theſe acts, ſo *repugnant to all divine and human laws*,* are ſuffered to exiſt? Are there no lords of the council ſufficiently zealous in the cauſe of liberty and religion to procure their repeal? Or, are there none others to make application to the council for that purpoſe? If therefore the purchaſing the Negroes for ſlaves be a *violation of the laws of nature and humanity*, it is pretty evident that the American planters do not *alone* bear the weight of that iniquity, nor are they only to be called upon to remove the evil. If however on the other hand the purchaſing Negroes for ſlaves be conſiſtent with divine and human obligations, care ſhould be taken to ſecure the property of the ſlave to his owner under all circum-

* Warburton's Sermon.

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ſtances, and ſuch a plan of inſtruction ſhould be digeſted, as might beſt conduce to the Negroes eternal welfare, without making them uneaſy in their preſent condition, or encouraging them to revolt againſt their owners. As the firſt thing to be done therefore is to determine the lawfulneſs of purchaſing Negroes for ſlaves, it may be proper to ſtate the fact fully, that thoſe whoſe high office it is to expound the divine will as far as it has been revealed, may be the better able to judge of the conformity or repugnance of this tranſaction to it.

The African ſtates on the weſt coaſt of that vaſt peninſula are all, except the Fantees and their confederates, purely monarchical, and the ſovereign claims the abſolute diſpoſal of the perſons as well as effects of his ſubjects. There is no individual over whom the ſovereign does not claim this right, unleſs ſuch individual has obtained his freedom by the grant of the ſovereign. Thoſe whom the ſovereign has permitted to have property, inveſt it in ſlaves, which they purchaſe either of their ſovereign or from the rich men of other ſtates, or their own; theſe great men conſider the offſpring of their ſlaves as their annual income, and ſell the children or parents as their convenience or neceſſity directs. Throughout Africa, as well among the Fantees as other nations, not only a man's ſlaves, but his wife, children, and even himſelf, are all liable to his debts, and the fines ſet on him by the ſovereign or the ſupreme council. The monarchs by this means frequently repoſſeſs themſelves of their

manumitted ſubjects and his ſlaves and children, and the Fantees by this means rid the ſtate of any dangerous individual. That ſuch ſhould be the policy of the African ſtates will not appear ſtrange to any one who is acquainted with what paſſes or has paſt in more enlightened parts of the world. It is a good ſpeculative poſition, that no man ought to be bound by conditions to which he never perſonally conſented, yet we ſhall find no government exiſting where the child would not be puniſhed for refuſing ſubmiſſion to the conſtitution handed down to him by his anceſtor; and indeed the permanency of all government reſts upon the acknowledged right in the parent to decide the political condition of his offſpring. In Ireland, more than two thirds of the inhabitants are not only denied a right to give their perſonal conſent to the laws by which they and their children are bound, but they are made incapable of acquiring that ſort of property which might give them influence with thoſe who make the laws. It is ſtill the caſe in Poland, and was the caſe in ſome parts of Britain not many years ſince, to transfer the ſervice of the inhabitants and the power over their lives, with the titles to the lands; and it was the univerſal practice among the Aſiatic nations, the Jews only excepted, to conſider a man's wife and children as his effects, and to ſell them for the ſatisfaction of his creditors, as appears from all hiſtory ancient and modern, but moſt authentically from

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the parable of debtor and creditor, recorded by St. Matthew.

Theſe things are not mentioned either to excuſe the policy of the African ſtates by their example, or to cenſure thoſe who have done them; but in order to obviate a vulgar reflection upon the African traders, which is, that the ſlavery of the people on that continent is owing to the demand their princes have found for ſlaves from the American colonies; whereas men have ſold one another from the very earlieſt ages of the world, and wherever ſovereign authority has been lodged, it has aſſumed a right to diſpoſe of the lives and properties of the ſubjects. From the coaſt of Guinea to the extremity of Abyſſinia there is not a ſtate, the Fantees only excepted, where the people are not, and as far as we know of them, always were, ſlaves; and their princes and great men traded with one another in ſlaves long before America was diſcovered. The demand which the American colonies have occaſioned, has probably given riſe to many acts of tyranny and oppreſſion in the ſovereigns, in order to poſſeſs themſelves of the ſlaves of their great men; but on the other hand it may have made them more careful of the lives of their own ſlaves or ſubjects, becauſe of the profit they made by ſelling them. A captain of an Engliſh ſhip who had offered the king of Dormi or Dehouma leſs than he had aſked for five hundred of his ſlaves, was invited by him to dinner the following day; they dined in a tent, and when they were riſing from table,

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the king of Dormi ſaid to the captain, You would not give me my price for my five hundred ſlaves, did you think I valued them too high? You may now have them for half the money. And ordering the back of the tent to be drawn up, the five hundred heads were ſhewn to him piled upon one another. This ſtory, which is indubitably atteſted, is a ſhocking proof of the deſpotiſm of the African princes, and it alſo ſerves to ſhew how ill founded another vulgar notion is, that the Negroes annually brought to our colonies from Africa, are ſtolen by our traders from thence. Indeed it is aſtoniſhing, that ſuch a notion ſhould ever have been entertained by any one, who ever thought about trade. To ſuppoſe that the ſeveral European ſtates ſhould ſettle forts and factories upon that coaſt, in order to protect their ſubjects in ſtealing away the inhabitants; that the ſame ſhips and captains ſhould return annually to the ſame places, and among them ſteal away near forty thouſand people each voyage, is ſo monſtrous, that the bare ſtating it is a ſufficient confutation. The manner in which that trade is carried on is this: The return of our ſhips to the coaſt of Africa being regular, the Negroe factors bring down the ſlaves they have purchaſed in the interior parts of the country at the times the ſhips are expected, and ſell or barter them to our captains for the beſt price they can get; ſome of theſe factors bring ſlaves even from the interior parts of Abyſſinia, if their own accounts may be credited, and others are

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brought them from an equal diſtance to the ſea coaſt of Barbary to ſupply the Turks. The princes and great men who reſide near the coaſt, or upon the navigable rivers, make their own bargains with our ſhip captains, or the governors of our forts, ſo that inſtances are very rare, of even ſingle Negroes being clandeſtinely carried off by any of our people; whenever ſuch a thing has been done, the captain who did it has never dared to return there again; and very fatal revenge has been taken upon ſome of his countrymen.

The Negroes being arrived in our colonies, are put up to ſale by their owners, and the planters purchaſe them. The Fantees are generally carried to Jamaica, where they are greatly valued on account of their hardineſs and high ſpirit. But as they were freemen in their own country, they are very difficult to be managed as ſlaves, and this is the principal reaſon of the frequent inſurrection in that iſland; while upon the continent eſpecially, inſurrections are ſeldom heard of.

The other Negroes having been always ſlaves, ſubmit to their new maſters willingly enough, when they know how they are to be employed. At firſt indeed they are under great terrors of being eat by the white people, and ſo ſtrong have the apprehenſions of many of them been upon their arrival, that no entreaties could prevail on them to take any ſuſtenance, leſt they ſhould become fat and fitter for our food, until ſome of their countrymen who had reſided ſome time in

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the colony were brought to them, and convinced them of the folly of their ſuſpicions.

From this account of the trade, the plain ſtate of the queſtion ſeems to be, whether it be lawful in the captains of our ſhips to purchaſe Negroes in Africa from thoſe of that country, who by the nature of their government, conſider them as their property, and keep them in actual ſervitude? And whether it be lawful for the Britiſh ſubjects in the colonies to purchaſe thoſe Negroes of thoſe captains, and to continue them and their offſpring in a ſtate of ſervitude?

If the reverend members of the Society ſhould be of opinion that this trade is contrary to divine laws, it will ſurely be proper to apply to government for an act of parliament to prohibit it, and at the ſame time to apply for lands to be given to ſuch Negroes as their maſters, influenced by that opinion, may releaſe from ſervitude; for ſuch will be its effect upon many of the North American planters. But if on the contrary the opinion ſhould be, that the trade is not a violation of the divine laws, it will be highly proper to tranſmit that opinion to the colonies, for the ſatisfaction of conſcientious planters, as well as to encourage them to give their Negroes inſtruction, thereby to avail themſelves of ſuch authority for making them contented with their condition.

No planter is ſo groſſly barbarous as not to wiſh to have his Negroes do his work with a good will; and very few would be ſo brutal

tal or ignorant as not to perceive, that were their Negroes inſtructed in religion, and taught to ſerve their maſters for conſcience ſake, that they would be much better ſerved by them; but it is ſurely the height of folly to expect of any owner of Negroes to permit them to be told, that he violates all divine and human laws by retaining them in his ſervice, or to allow them to have any notions of a religion, whoſe ſanctions he muſt appear to them to condemn, by making them his ſlaves. Until therefore the lawfulneſs of continuing theſe people in perpetual ſervitude be determined, it will be in vain to expect that our American planters will permit their Negroes to be inſtructed, much leſs contribute towards their inſtruction.

Many regulations are wanting for ſecuring good uſage to theſe unhappy people, which no authority, but that of parliament, can enforce, and it is moſt reproachful to this country, that there are more than five hundred thouſand of its ſubjects, for whom the legiſlature has never ſhewn the leaſt regard. All regulations, it is true, would be prepoſterous if the ſervitude of theſe people be unlawful; but then it is ſtill more reproachful to this country, that ſo great a number of its ſubjects are unlawfully made ſlaves. On all accounts therefore the lawfulneſs of the thing muſt firſt be determined. When the lords the biſhops have declared their opinion of the divine law, an act of parliament will be ſufficient to decide what ſhall be human

law; and until the first is declared, it would be presumption to offer any regulations to be made by the other.

APPENDIX.

Some time after the foregoing tracts were written, and were presented to the late most reverend and learned president of the Society for propagating the gospel in foreign parts, the opinion of the Society respecting the lawfulness of purchasing or keeping Negroe slaves was called for in order to frame an answer to a letter received by the Society from Mr. Benezet of Philadelphia. With the permission of the venerable Society, I subjoin a copy of the answer written by their secretary, as containing their opinion.

Copy of a letter sent by the reverend Doctor Burton, secretary of the Society for the propagation of the gospel in foreign parts, to Mr. Anthony Benezet at Philadelphia. Dated the 6th of February, 1768.

SIR,

YOUR letter to the Society for propagating the gospel in foreign parts, of the 26th of April last, hath been considered by them with all due attention. And I am directed

rected to aſſure you that they have a great eſteem for you, on account of the tenderneſs and humanity which you expreſs for the Negroe ſlaves, and are extremely deſirous that they ſhould be treated with the utmoſt care and kindneſs, both with regard to temporals and ſpirituals. That their labour ſhould be made eaſy to them in all reſpects. That they ſhould be provided with conveniencies and accommodations to render their ſituation comfortable, and eſpecially that they ſhould be regularly inſtructed in the principles of the Chriſtian religion. The Society have for many years paſt uniformly given directions to their agents in Barbadoes, agreeable to theſe ſentiments, which they believe have been obſerved in a good degree. However they have lately ſent to make more particular inquiries into this matter with full purpoſe of tranſmitting, in the ſtrongeſt terms, ſuch further orders as may be found neceſſary, and of watching over the execution of them with all poſſible attention; hoping that the good effects of their example will have a proper, and by degrees a general influence on other owners of ſlaves in America. But they cannot condemn the practice of keeping ſlaves as unlawful, finding the contrary very plainly implied in the precepts given by the apoſtles, both to maſters and ſervants, which laſt were then for the moſt part ſlaves. And if the doctrine of the unlawfulneſs of ſlavery ſhould be taught in our colonies, the Society apprehend that maſters, inſtead of being con-

vinced of it, will grow more ſuſpicious and cruel, and much more unwilling to let their ſlaves learn Chriſtianity: and that the poor creatures themſelves, if they come to look on this doctrine as true, will be ſo ſtrongly tempted by it to rebel againſt their maſters, that the moſt dreadful conſequences to both will be likely to follow, and therefore, though the Society is fully ſatisfied that your intention in this matter is perfectly good, yet they moſt earneſtly beg you not to go farther in publiſhing your notions, but rather to retract them if you ſhall ſee cauſe, which they hope you may on farther conſideration.

TRACT

TRACT THE THIRD.

OF THE

NEGROE SLAVES IN THE COLONIES.

THE lawfulneſs of purchaſing Negroe ſlaves, and continuing them and their poſterity in perpetual ſervitude, having been admitted by the venerable Society for propagating the goſpel in foreign parts, in their letter to Mr. Benezet, at Philadelphia, dated the 6th of February, 1768, I ſhall now, in purſuance of my former purpoſe, endeavour to engage the attention of the Society to ſome conſiderations which may lead to a humane and chriſtian ſyſtem, for the civil government and religious inſtruction of thoſe unhappy people.

The term ſlave having no legal ſignification in Great Britain, and being generally uſed for deſcribing the ſubjects of the moſt deſpotic tyrants, it is commonly underſtood to denote, one who has no rights, his labour, property, and life being at the diſcretion of his

his maſter. This definition of the term is far from being a true one in reſpect to the Negroe ſlaves in the Britiſh colonies; their owners have no other than a legal property in them, and legal authority over them, and the ſame laws which make them ſlaves, give them rights.

In no Britiſh colony is the life of the ſlave left in the power of the owner, and for cruel uſage, or inſufficient nouriſhment, the ſlave has a remedy ſimilar to that of apprentices in England, though from the ignorance of the Negroe, and the partiality of the magiſtrates, who are too frequently *Socii Criminis*, the tyranny of the planter is much ſeldomer puniſhed in America, than the rigour of a maſter in England.

If then the ſlavery of the Negroes in our colonies be no more than a legal, perpetual ſervitude, or hereditary apprenticeſhip, thoſe people are ſurely to be deemed ſubjects of Great Britain in their particular capacity and circumſtance, nor ought the laws of the ſeveral colonies reſpecting them, to paſs *ſub ſilentio*, and without examination by the king's privy council, as matters with which the ſupreme magiſtrate has nothing to do; neither ſhould thoſe laws be permitted to ſleep after they have been enacted, or what is ſtill worſe, ſuffered to be carried into execution by thoſe they deem parties, and between whom and the Negroes they create reciprocal duties.—The influence of the venerable

Society

Society may perhaps obtain for theſe people, what it has been the diſgrace of every adminiſtration ſince the Revolution to have neglected, an impartial diſpenſation of the laws, nor has any patriot in all that time been found diſintereſted enough to take their cauſe in hand; the Negroes indeed can do nothing either to further them in their purſuit of power, or to ſecure their elections in the country; they can only recommend them by their prayers, to a ſeat in a kingdom where no modern patriot chuſes to take his entire reward. We are now bleſſed with a prince upon the throne, whoſe heart, warmed by religious benevolence, wiſhes the felicity of all mankind; would he then ſuffer, if he were informed of it, ſo vaſt a multitude of his own ſujects to be inhumanely ſcourged, lacerated by whips, nouriſhment denied, and the taſk of labour exacted, racked by every ſpecies of torture the moſt wanton tyranny can invent, and either forced to expire under them, or their lives ſhortened by their ſeverity. And all this in the teeth of laws, to which his Majeſty, by his repreſentative, has aſſented?

Were his Majeſty moved to give directions to his miniſters, in this interval of war throughout the world, to take under conſideration the ſeveral colony acts for the government of ſlaves, and to require the ſeveral governors and chief juſtices to report the manner of their execution; the legal rights

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of the Negroes would then be known, and the defects in the diſpenſation of juſtice towards them be pointed out. It would then appear, that notwithſtanding the provincial laws enjoin reſt to the ſlaves on the Sabbath, the moſt humane planters in the iſlands allow the Negroes that day to work in for themſelves, as their beſt way of employing their time, while others contrive to ſhare with the Negroe in the profits of his labour, by either abridging him of his ordinary weekly allowance of proviſions, or obliging him to find part of his cloathing on account of giving him *all Sunday to himſelf.* I take particular notice of this evaſion of divine and ſtatute laws, becauſe of its rendering all religious inſtruction impracticable, and to ſhew that the civil and religious regulations reſpecting theſe wretches muſt go together; indeed until the planters are made to know that their property in their Negroes is legal, not abſolute and unconditional, but that their Negroes have rights as well as they, nothing can ever be done for their civil comfort or their religious inſtruction. The colony laws univerſally prohibit the teaching Negroes to write, a caution which the planters think neceſſary to prevent conſpiracies, and communication of ill deſigns; nor is writing at all requiſite for their religious inſtruction, even reading does not ſeem indiſpenſably neceſſary for that purpoſe; How few among the Jews, or in any nation

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of antiquity, underſtood letters? And until the Reformation the people of this country were generally illiterate; will it then be ſaid, that none in thoſe circumſtances were capable of being taught all that was neceſſary for their ſalvation? Or that they could not know and believe what was for their ſoul's health? On the other hand, the knowledge of letters, even in the loweſt degree, is too often ſuppoſed to carry with it a ſort of qualification for an eaſy life, and an exemption from a laborious one; and the latter being the Negroes lot, they might perhaps bear it with more unwillingneſs, or ſeek ſome deſperate means for ridding themſelves of it. The ſtated ſervice of our church cannot indeed be joined in throughout, by thoſe who cannot read; but I ſhould hope to ſee a more ſimple mode of religious worſhip and inſtruction, preſented to the Negroes, one in which they ſhould bear a leſs ſhare than is given by our liturgy to the people, and therefore better adapted to their capacities and condition. Too much muſt not be attempted at once, *men's meat muſt not be given to babes.* Theſe creatures are even ignorant that there is a God, they muſt then be taught a maker before they can comprehend a redeemer. It has been too much our way to tell them of both in a breath, and if they could be got to gabber over the apoſtles creed without underſtanding the meaning of a ſingle term, then to throw ſome water in their face, and tell all

the world how many Chriſtians we had made, and thus expoſe the intereſts of the church and the honour of the Society, to the ridicule of thoſe who were acquainted with the mummery of thoſe vain boaſtings. Teaching the Negroes the church of England's catechiſm, is the general employment of the Society's miſſionaries; but beſides its being much above their comprehenſion, it is too long, and too difficult to be got by heart by the Negroes in the little time the miſſionary can ſpare to each, or their owners can be without their ſervice, for the owners of ſlaves will not ſuffer them to aſſemble together in large bodies, nor to have much intercourſe with one another; indeed few owners of Negroes will ſuffer them to go to the catechiſt at all, becauſe of his houſe being a ſort of general rendezvous for them, where they are more apt to teach each other miſchief than to profit by the catechiſt's inſtructions. In thoſe colonies, where the Negroes out-number the white inhabitants, ſuch rendezvous would be highly dangerous, even in the towns, and the planters in the country would never conſent to let their ſeveral gangs meet together. The truth is, that all inſtruction intended for theſe people while they are ſlaves, muſt be given them within their owners precincts.

Itinerant miſſionaries will therefore beſt ſerve this purpoſe, and as the miſſionary's attendance at each plantation would, after ſome time, be only neceſſary for an hour on Sundays,

Sundays, he might visit several the same day; for if the planters approved of the plan, either themselves or their overseers would carry it on in the absence of the missionary.

Laymen would probably be more zealous in this business than ordained missionaries, as they might hope by a faithful discharge of it, to recommend themselves to the Society for Orders and less laborious missions. Besides, the capacity of a Negroe is so mean, and the things he knows so very few and of so ordinary a sort, that a man of a liberal education never could stoop to make use of such low, not to say absurd imagery, as would be necessary to convey his ideas to them. Indeed I am afraid there would be something impious in the representations he would be obliged to make of the Almighty in order to bring him down to their understandings, nor would it be easy to frame any thing like a creed or catechism for these poor creatures that would not be either shocking or ridiculous.

There is a dialect peculiar to those Negroes who have been born in our colonies, or have been long there, that the missionary must adopt, in order to make himself understood, than which nothing could be more uncouth to the pronunciation of a man of science; nor would it be less difficult for him to bring himself to study what they said to him. Enthusiasm is only equal to such undertakings, and none could be fitter for the employment, than those lay preachers who are now in such numbers offering themselves to the Society.

Might I be permitted to hint at the inſtructions which would be proper for theſe miſſionaries, I would confine them to a very ſhort ſummary of religion. That there is one God in heaven who never dies, and who ſees and knows every thing. That he made all people, both whites and blacks. That he puniſhes all roguery, miſchief, and lying, either before death or after it. That he puniſhes them for it before they die, by putting it into their maſters hearts to correct them, and after death by giving them to the devil to burn in his own place. That he will put it into their maſters hearts to be kind to thoſe who do their work without knavery or murmuring. To take care of them in old age and ſickneſs, and not to plague them with too much work, or to chaſtiſe them when they are not able to do it. That in the other world, after they die, he will give all good Negroes reſt from all labour, and plenty of all good things. That it was God Almighty who put it into their maſters heads to give them Sunday for a holiday, and for that reaſon they ought to ſay prayers to him, and ſing ſongs to him on that day. That the miſſionary was come to them to tell them what God Almighty would have them do, that they might deſerve his kindneſs for them, and that they would anger him if they did not mind what he told them. The heads of ſuch a diſcourſe being thrown into a ſort of catechiſm for the Negroes to get by heart, it would be fixed in their memories, and thoſe of them who could

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reaſon upon it would acquire an appetite to know ſomewhat more. To ſuch, the doctrine of the ſatisfaction might then be opened, by ſimply telling them that every body, black and white, had done ſo many bad things that God Almighty was very angry with all the world, and ſaid he would kill them all, and that none of them ſhould be happy after their death. Upon which Jeſus Chriſt, God's only Son, ſaid he would take their faults upon himſelf, and that God might puniſh him for them; and accordingly Jeſus Chriſt came down from heaven and ſuffered himſelf to be whipped and tortured, and at laſt killed, and ſo made it up between his Father and the world. That he left the Bible behind him for directions to the world what they ſhould do to pleaſe his Father and him, and that he promiſed to ſtand up for all thoſe who ſhould do what that book told them, and would help them when they prayed to him for his aſſiſtance.

The Negroes in general have an ear for muſick, and might without much trouble be taught to ſing hymns, which would be the pleaſanteſt method of inſtructing them, and bringing them ſpeedily to offer praiſe to God. They ſhould be taught ſhort prayers for morning and evening, and grace to ſay at meals.

To engage the planters to ſecond the endeavours of the miſſionaries, it would be highly neceſſary to preface the directory, which may be thought fit to be compoſed for the uſe of the miſſionaries, and to be diſperſed among

among the planters, with a diſcourſe addreſſed to the owners of Negroes in the colonies, in which the lawfulneſs of retaining the Negroe ſlaves in perpetual ſervitude ſhould be ſet forth as the opinion of the Society, and the obligation to bring thoſe into the knowledge of the truth whom God Almighty permits to be ſubject to their direction, and to labour for their benefit, preſſed home upon their conſciences.

Care being thus taken for an impartial adminiſtration of civil juſtice to theſe unhappy people, and the ſabbath allowed them for the purpoſes of religion: their owners being alſo freed from all apprehenſions of loſing their Negroes ſervice by ſuffering them to be inſtructed in religious duties, and a mode of inſtruction being adapted to their capacities and conditions, much might be hoped through the Divine favour and aſſiſtance, and the ignorance and cruel treatment of theſe creatures would no longer be a reproach to the wiſdom and humanity of our civil and eccleſiaſtical rulers. The ſtupid obſtinacy of the Negroes may indeed make it always neceſſary to ſubject them to ſevere diſcipline from their maſters, but in no other circumſtances does their condition of perpetual ſervitude require that their treatment ſhould be different from that of hired ſervants, eſpecially if they had the ſame religion and morality to bind them, that the others have. But whilſt the civil authority overlooks them, and they are left without other motives for action, and hardly more know-

knowledge of their duty, than is common to them with domeſtic animals, it is no wonder that they are treated like brute beaſts, or that it ſhould be almoſt neceſſary to treat them as ſuch. If they are incapable of feeling mentally, they will the more frequently be made to feel in their fleſh. To thoſe therefore who have the power or influence to redreſs the grievances of theſe poor wretches, is their caſe committed, and from thoſe, who through indolence, or by feigning ignorance, or pretending an abhorrence of their condition, turn away from conſidering it, will the impartial Judge of all the earth, one day require an account of the miſery of theſe their fellow creatures.

FINIS.